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BULGARIA

More Rumors About Merger with USSR

A rumor currently circulating in Romanian "official circles" links Bulgarian party chief Zhivkov's recent talks with his Soviet and Romanian counterparts to an alleged plan to make Bulgaria the sixteenth Soviet Republic. This step, the rumor claims, would necessitate a "corridor" through Romania, if only in the sense of concessionary passage rights for Soviet goods and persons.

Rumors of this sort have circulated regularly since Brezhnev's September 1973 visit to Sofia, when Zhivkov boasted that Bulgaria and the Soviet Union would henceforth act as "one organism, with the same lungs and the same circulatory system."

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The latest rumor may stem in part from the statement in the May 8 Zhivkov-Brezhnev communique that the two sides examined "key directions for further deepening interaction." The secrecy surrounding the Zhivkov-Ceausescu meeting three days later undoubtedly fed the speculation.

General tension throughout the Balkans this spring makes fertile ground for rapid spread of rumors.

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ROMANIA

Changes Continue, Trofin Further Downgraded

Virgil Trofin, the deputy premier who was demoted to a provincial party chief in March, officially lost another of his jobs in the central apparatus when he was replaced yesterday as head of the Committee for People's Councils, a body that oversees local government. Trofin's successor is Iosif Uglar, an ethnic Hungarian who until now was party first secretary and government boss of Satu Mare county.

In another development, the Socialist Unity Front (SUF) congress that opened yesterday is expected to announce a number of personnel changes. These shifts could provide insights into the personnel changes in the party and government that are expected in preparation for the party congress late this year. The SUF congress always precedes that of the party, and appears to play an important preparatory role for the party conclave.